

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Yugoslavia

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

Ljubljana Plant

1. On the night of 15 or 16 April 1949, fire broke out at the Lek Pharmaceutical and Research Plant on Celovska Street, Ljubljana, in the section used for drying drug compounds. Fire damages have been estimated at 500,000 dinars, but it is likely that the total loss far exceeds this amount because of the difficulty in replacing 60 pounds of drug compounds used in the production of belladonna, codeine and astmofilin. Apparently, the night watchman, Ivan Pavlovic, an ardent Communist and relatively new employee, neglected to turn off two of the three electric heaters in this section, but instead shut off the ventilator at 2200 hours. Fire broke out about half an hour later. Three companies of the Ljubljana fire brigade managed to stop it from spreading to the plant warehouse where four pounds of ether and a large quantity of gasoline were stored.
2. Fifteen UDB operatives and a detachment of armed militia promptly arrived on the scene. Pavlovic, Henrik Ropic, the plant director, Mira Lahovnik, plant trade union chief, and Janko Rotar, day-time guard, were held for an interrogation which lasted until the following afternoon. All were then released with the exception of Pavlovic, who was taken to the UDB Central Prison in Ljubljana.

Menges Plant

3. Low wages and hazardous working conditions at the Lek plant in Menges have made it difficult for the plant to keep skilled workers. A shortage of stone masons and other workers has delayed completion of a new building for the manufacture of ether. At the same time, Lek is unable to finance further work on this building because of its debt to the Yugoslav National Bank of 2,500,000 dinars, which were borrowed for purchases of imported raw material.
4. Meanwhile, Dr. Wilhelm Koch, technical director of the Menges plant, is continuing his research work on extracts, primarily, belladonna, opium, and "filicis maris". Recently, he ordered the plant to start using black rye horns (sic) in the production of rye extract. Apart from his work at Lek, Koch is practicing medicine in nearby villages and has allegedly won the respect of the local citizenry.

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DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77

Auth: [REDACTED]